

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 160138
ORIGIN ARA-10

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 160138

LIMDIS - FOR CHARGE FROM TODMAN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PORG, SHUM, MILI, AR

SUBJECT: U.S.-ARGENTINE RELATIONS

1. ARGENTINE AMBASSADOR AJA ESPIL MADE SEVERAL INTEREST-
ING COMMENTS TO ME DURING LUNCH ON JULY 7. HE IS VERY
ANXIOUS THAT WE SHOW SUPPORT FOR VIDELA WHOM HE FEELS
IS UNDER GREAT PRESSURE FROM MILITARY HARDLINERS.

2. HE MADE A PLEA FOR THE SECRETARY TO INCLUDE ARGEN-
TINA WHEN HE VISITS BRAZIL. HE ADDED THAT IT IS
TERRIBLY IMPORTANT FOR THE SECRETARY TO MEET WITH THE
JUNTA AND WITH SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE ARGENTINE JUDICIARY.
HE URGED ME TO INCLUDE THE COURTS ALSO DURING MY UPCOMING
TRIP. THIS WAY YOU WILL BE SUPPORTING PRESIDENT VIDELA
AND THE RULE OF LAW, HE EXPLAINED. THROUGHOUT THE
CONVERSATION THE AMBASSADOR SPOKE OF THE NEED TO ASSIST
VIDELA TO WITHSTAND THE PRESSURE FROM ARGENTINA'S
MILITARY HARDLINERS, INCLUDING NAVY COMMANDER MASSERA
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 160138

WHOSE SERVICE RUNS THE FOREIGN MINISTRY.

3. I EXPLAINED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TREATY OF
TLATELOLCO TO THE UNITED STATES AND THE POSITIVE PSYCHO-
LOGICAL IMPACT WHICH AN ARGENTINE SIGNATURE OF THE

TREATY WOULD HAVE. I NOTED THAT THIS SHOULD NOT BE

TERRIBLY DIFFICULT SINCE ARGENTINA HAS INDICATED A

READINESS TO ACCEPT FULL SCOPE SAFEGUARDS. THE
AMBASSADOR AGREED THAT THIS SOUNDED REASONABLE.

4. ON MILITARY RELATIONS, AJA ESPIL SAID THAT ARGENTINA IS REVIEWING ITS MILITARY AGREEMENTS WITH THE UNITED STATES AS WELL AS WHETHER TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS YEAR'S UNITAS NAVAL EXERCISE. THESE MATTERS ARE UNDER REVIEW, THE AMBASSADOR EXPLAINED, BECAUSE OF U.S. ACTIONS AGAINST ARGENTINA IN THE MILITARY FIELD RANGING FROM THE DENIAL OF ARMS SALES BY THE EXECUTIVE TO THE KENNEDY-HUMPHREY AMENDMENT. AJA ESPIL SAID THAT THE KENNEDY-HUMPHREY AMENDMENT WAS RECEIVED VERY NEGATIVELY BY THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT, BECAUSE IT TELLS THE ARGENTINES TO BEHAVE BETTER BY A CERTAIN DATE OR ELSE THERE WILL BE NO ARMS TRANSFERS OR TRAINING. WITH RESPECT TO UNITAS, ARGENTINA FEELS THAT THE UNITED STATES NAVY IS THE PRINCIPAL BENEFICIARY BECAUSE THE EXERCISE PERMITS THE U.S. TO DEPLOY ITS SHIPS THROUGHOUT LATIN AMERICA AND TO DEVELOP FAMILIARITY WITH DISTANT PORTS AND OTHER NAVAL FACILITIES. THE UNITAS QUESTION IS BEING REVIEWED WITH OTHER SOUTH AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS.

5. THE AMBASSADOR OBSERVED THAT ARGENTINA IS BEING FORCED TO DEVELOP MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER
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PAGE 03 STATE 160138

GOVERNMENTS, SUCH AS GERMANY. ONCE ARGENTINA ORIENTS ITS ARMS PURCHASES TO OTHER COUNTRIES, IT WILL BE VERY HARD FOR THE UNITED STATES TO REESTABLISH ITS MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WITH ARGENTINA.

6. I TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT WE WANT TO MAINTAIN SOME MILITARY RELATIONSHIPS AND WILL BE MORE RESPONSIVE TO ARGENTINA AS THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IMPROVES THERE. I NOTED THAT SOME OF THEIR RECENT HUMAN RIGHTS STEPS OFFERED US SOME ENCOURAGEMENT AND MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO ABSTAIN ON AN ARGENTINE LOAN AT THE WORLD BANK RATHER THAN VOTE NEGATIVELY. I ASKED WHETHER ARGENTINA WANTED US TO THINK OF IT AS A MEMBER OF THE HARD-LINE BLOCK OF COUNTRIES AND BE DEALT WITH AS A MEMBER OF SUCH A GROUP, OR PRESERVE ITS UNIQUENESS AND BE THOUGHT OF AS ARGENTINA. AJA ESPIL RESPONDED THAT ARGENTINA WANTS TO BE DEALT WITH INDIVIDUALLY ALTHOUGH THE UNITAS QUESTION IS NECESSARILY A REGIONAL ISSUE.

7. TURNING TO ANTI-SEMITISM, I SAID MY GENERAL IMPRESSION IS THAT THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT IS NOT ANTI-SEMITIC. IF SO, I ASKED, WHY DOESN'T THE GOA SPEAK OUT?

AJA ESPIL SAID THAT HE PERSONALLY DRAFTED THE DECREE
BANNING CABILDO MAGAZINE (TEMPORARILY). HE SAID HE
ALSO APOLOGIZED TO HIS OLD FRIEND, JACOBO KOVADLOFF OF
THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE, FOR WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM
IN ARGENTINA. BUT IT DOES NOT MAKE MY JOB ANY EASIER,
AJA ESPIL NOTED, THAT WHILE I AM MEETING WITH KOVADLOFF
AT THE EMBASSY, THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE IS DENOUNCE-
ING ARGENTINA AT A PRESS CONFERENCE IN NEW YORK. VANCE

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